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## Second Only to Christ: Joseph Smith in Modern Mormon Piety

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CHAPTER 1

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SECOND ONLY TO CHRIST:  
JOSEPH SMITH IN  
MODERN MORMON PIETY

*James B. Allen*

Something gave me pause as I tried to figure out how to approach the subject of Joseph Smith in modern Mormon piety. How could I stand back, as scholars are supposed to do, and take a detached look at the matter when my whole life had been so much a part of this tradition? How could I be objective about it? The answer, of course, was simply that I could not. I am, after all, one of those lifelong Mormons whose whole value system has been influenced by a half century of intensive exposure to the very influences I will talk about. My objectivity includes personal experience, and this personal experience has helped determine my selection of examples. When I suggest that some idea or story is deeply imbedded in the Mormon tradition, it is not only because I have run across it in the mass of sermons, books, and articles I have read, but also because I have heard it, or something like it, time and time again, and because I personally believe in the divine mission of Joseph Smith. My own life, then, becomes one of my primary sources as I attempt to evaluate the role of Joseph Smith in the religious life of the Mormon community.

At the same time, let me not mislead you about the implications of some of the stories I will relate. Just because I believe in Joseph Smith does not mean I accept every interpretation or believe *every* story about him that comes across the Mormon pulpit or through the Mormon press. An essential and very rewarding part of my career has been the need to stand back frequently and reevaluate the historical Joseph Smith in light of whatever information I may discover or documents I may have a chance to examine. Various elements of my understanding change frequently, and I suspect that every Mormon who studies his own history has a similar experience from time to time. But my concern here is not with the validity of Joseph Smith's teachings, the authenticity of his divine manifestations, or the truth or falsity of any story about him. It is, rather, with the image of Joseph Smith in the Mormon mind and the role that image plays in Mormon patterns of worship and devotion. For the purposes of this discussion I am primarily concerned with what Mormons believe about Joseph Smith. After all, it is what people believe to be true that motivates them, and it is Joseph Smith's role in the Mormon belief system that we are dealing with here.

Around 1952 I had a fairly commonplace experience that, for some strange reason, has stayed with me—maybe because it helped me crystallize for myself the place of Joseph Smith in my own piety. I was a university student, spending the summer working as a transportation agent in the lodge at the north rim of the Grand Canyon. Just across the lobby from my desk was the registration desk, and one of the clerks there was a divinity student. One day I saw him talking to two young Mormon girls who were also employed at the lodge for the summer, and they seemed somewhat agitated. I tuned in as well as I could from across

the near-empty hall and heard him telling the girls that Mormons were not Christians—they did not believe in Christ and did not know what it meant to accept him as their personal Savior. The Mormons, he said, had replaced Christ with Joseph Smith, for it was from Joseph, not Christ, that they got their doctrines, and it was through Joseph Smith, not Christ, that they expected to be saved. This was a reference to the Mormon belief that the priesthood (i.e., the authority to act in the name of God) can exist only in one church, that because of apostasy and transgression since New Testament times it was lost from the earth, and that now, in the latter days, it has been restored through Joseph Smith and exists only in the church founded by him. In an instant my experience as a missionary for two years flashed through my mind, and suddenly I wanted to shout across the hall, “Hey, you, you’re wrong! We don’t worship Joseph Smith—we worship Christ. The Book of Mormon testifies of Christ, Joseph Smith taught of Christ, the whole church is a living witness of the reality of Christ, even though we understand him a little differently than you do.” I literally boiled inside at the suggestion that we had replaced Christ with Joseph Smith. I restrained myself, however, from shouting across the hall, and when the girls came to ask me about it all, I explained as best I could. “Joseph Smith,” I said, “certainly will never take the place of Christ. Nor is it possible that we will ever worship him—but in terms of what he has done for us, he is certainly second to Christ.”

I might have said “second only to Christ,” for there, in a nutshell, was an expression of the role of Joseph Smith in the religious life of the Mormons. He was the founding prophet—and more. Through him came the Book of Mormon, the Doctrine and Covenants, and the Pearl of Great

Price—books that Mormons consider scripture, reading and quoting from them as much as they would the Bible. Through him came the distinctive doctrines and practices that set Mormons apart from other denominations, including the sacred temple ordinances that provide a special relationship explicable only to Mormons who have experienced them. Joseph, we Mormons believe, talked with God and angels in order to prepare himself for the task of restoring not only the ancient truths that had been lost but also the ancient church itself, with its exclusive priesthood authority. He was the prophet of the restoration, foretold as such by ancient prophets, and those who accept all this can hardly help but view him as second only to Christ in terms of his role in their personal salvation.

All this is fundamental to the faith, at least so far as I understand and believe. At the same time, other images have built up in the Mormon mind that have become part of what might be called a popular piety. None of these tangential interpretations are official, but for many Latter-day Saints they are part of their personal belief system. Joseph Smith has been endowed with heroic traits and accomplishments far beyond what he himself would have asked for, to the point that it becomes difficult even for the faithful to separate the historic Joseph from his heroic image. For my own part, I am not greatly alarmed at this, for, as someone has said, “It is the quality of great men that they continue to live long after they are gone,”<sup>1</sup> and it is simply natural that their virtues rather than their vices live on with them. My only concern, as a church member and teacher, is that the faith of my students is not so dependent on the sometimes exaggerated, mythical qualities portrayed in some popular images of the Prophet that their faith is hurt when they suddenly discover some human characteristic

or failing that seems incongruous with what they have been led to believe. I am not so vain as to think I know the historical Joseph any better than anyone else, but I am fully convinced that the reality was impressive enough that he can admirably survive any human frailties revealed in an honest attempt to present a balanced image.<sup>2</sup>

How did this popular piety emerge in Mormonism? During his lifetime Joseph Smith's closest associates certainly saw him as a fallible, though great, human being. They believed his prophetic utterances, but they also saw him as a man who had failings, who could make mistakes, and who did not feel it necessary to play the traditional role of "prophet" one hundred percent of the time. He readily confessed his own human frailties, was sometimes chastised by revelation for his personal follies, and when people commented on some of his unprophet-like actions he emphatically declared that "a prophet was a prophet only when he was acting as such."<sup>3</sup> His closest friends saw some of his prophecies and revelations fail to be fulfilled and even heard him admit that "Some revelations are of God: some revelations are of man: and some revelations are of the devil."<sup>4</sup> They saw him in every mood—from joyful elation over some great success to the despondency of great discouragement. Brigham Young, one of his closest associates, reported fifteen years after Joseph's death: "He had all the weaknesses a man could have when the vision was not upon him, when he was left to himself. He was constituted like other men, and would have required years and years longer in the flesh to become a Moses in all things."<sup>5</sup>

At the same time, his disciples saw him as a living prophet—and it was in his role as prophet that Joseph Smith's pedestal in Mormon piety was created. Significantly, it was those who knew him best who created both

the pedestal and the heroic figure that occupied it after he was dead, though even during his lifetime the creation process was well on its way. In 1836, at the height of Joseph Smith's economic difficulties in Kirtland, Ohio, church members lost confidence in him by the droves and some even threatened his life. Brigham Young was among those who braved the storm to declare their continuing belief that, come what may, Joseph was still a true prophet.<sup>6</sup> In July 1843, preaching at a Sunday meeting in Pittsburgh on the importance of the "gathering," Brigham declared: "Who is the author of this work of gathering? Joseph Smith, the Prophet, as an instrument in the hands of God, is the author of it. He is the greatest man on earth." In December, while presiding over a prayer meeting in the absence of Joseph Smith, Brigham "instructed the brethren upon the necessity of following our file leader, and our Savior, in all his laws and commandments, without asking questions."<sup>7</sup> This was the sentiment that soon characterized the role of Joseph Smith in Mormon piety.

If leaders such as Brigham Young were thus laying the foundation for Joseph's historic pedestal during his own lifetime, so were more ordinary disciples, such as William Clayton—one of the Prophet's faithful scribes who never made much of an impact on the pages of history. But his steady faith represented that of thousands of historical unknowns who were the brick and mortar with which the Prophet built the earthly kingdom of God. Clayton first arrived in Nauvoo late in 1840, when it was still struggling to be born, and was immediately overwhelmed by its founding father. His awe quickly turned to personal idolization, and he soon reported his impressions to his friends back home in England. "He is *not* an idiot," he wrote as if to combat some vicious tale, "but a man of sound judgment,

and possessed of abundance of intelligence and whilst you listen to his conversation you receive intelligence which expands your mind and causes your heart to rejoice." He then described all the Prophet's greatest qualities and poignantly added, "He says 'I am a man of like passions with yourselves,' but truly I wish I was such a man."<sup>8</sup>

Within a year, however, Clayton saw many of his fondest expectations shattered. Church leaders asked him not to stay in Nauvoo but, rather, to settle across the Mississippi River in Iowa where, Joseph Smith had prophesied, the city of Zarahemla would rise with as much greatness as Nauvoo. But in Zarahemla Clayton found nothing but disappointment. His efforts to be a farmer failed; his investment in a steamboat with the Prophet's apostle-brother failed; he found too many unsaintly Saints; and, worst of all, Joseph's prediction concerning Zarahemla failed: not only did the settlement fail to rival Nauvoo, but in the end it was totally abandoned by the church. But William came back across the river, went to work for the Prophet as a scribe, and in less than four months could write to his friends in England: "My faith in this doctrine, and in the prophet and officers is firm, unshaken, and unmoved; nay, rather, it is strengthened and settled firmer than ever." He went to great lengths to refute charges then circulating of wrongdoing and intemperance on the part of Joseph, then added: "The more I am with him, the more I love him; the more I know of him, . . . [the more I] am sorry that people should give heed to evil reports concerning him, when we all know the great service he has rendered the church."<sup>9</sup>

Clayton had ample opportunity over the next two years to observe the Prophet as a man. Most of Joseph's time was spent in activities not normally considered prophetic, such as business and civic affairs. Clayton was by his side most



of the time. He saw him struggle with personal and family problems, place trust in untrustworthy men, fail in some business efforts, and do many more things that are the lot of ordinary human beings. But none of this mattered, for he also felt the love of the Prophet, sat at his feet as he received revelation and taught the doctrines of the kingdom, felt a profound inner confirmation that Joseph's doctrines were true, and witnessed firsthand his numerous accomplishments and successes. In addition, a kind of spiritual pragmatism in the Mormonism of that day helps explain how pedestals are built in spite of potentially undermining influences. The Saints looked at prophecy, for example, not just as prediction but also as their own personal challenge. They were obligated to make it work, and if they failed in that effort it was not necessarily a sign that the Prophet was not a true prophet. "Verily, verily, I say unto you," the Lord had told them through Joseph Smith in January 1841,

that when I give a commandment to any of the sons of men to do a work unto my name, and those sons of men go with all their might and with all they have to perform that work, and cease not in their diligence, and their enemies come upon them and hinder them from performing that work, behold, it behooveth me to require that work no more at the hands of those sons of men, but to accept of their offerings. (D&C 124:49)

Thus the Saints could rationalize some prophetic failures. They could also rationalize human frailties in their prophet, since he himself had told them of his weaknesses and had said that a prophet did not always act as such. But the failures and frailties tended to be forgotten when, in the long run, the personal influence the disciples had felt in their lives became paramount. For disciples like Clayton, the Prophet was always an example, never a scapegoat.

The hero of Mormon piety was already being created, but it was his death that elevated him to his final pedestal. In some ways what happened to Joseph Smith after death is reminiscent of what Merrill D. Peterson has characterized as the apotheosis of Thomas Jefferson and John Adams. It seemed a miracle to Americans that they both died on 4 July 1826, as the nation was celebrating the fiftieth anniversary of the Declaration of Independence. Already they were statesmen-heroes, but the fact that both lived until this important memorial day made their dramatic deaths “a fable of the republic.” Says Peterson, it

brought men into a community of loyalty and belief, and turned the nation’s loss into a triumph. It was the creation of a pervasive national faith reaching for justification and here finding it. Providence, Union, Heritage: these were three of the emotion-laden ideas composing the patriotic faith. In the “double apotheosis” of 1826 they were confirmed with awesome finality, and formed into a fabled story of America.<sup>10</sup>

President John Quincy Adams, son of the dead statesman, issued an official proclamation declaring this wonderful event to be heaven-directed. It provided a “new seal” to the belief that the nation was under the special care of Providence. “In this most singular coincidence,” the president declared, “the finger of Providence is plainly visible! It hallows the Declaration of Independence as Word of God, and is the bow in the heavens, that promises its principles shall be eternal, and their dissemination universal over the Earth.”<sup>11</sup>

Joseph Smith did not die peacefully of old age, as did Jefferson and Adams. Rather, he and his brother Hyrum were brutally murdered in Carthage, Illinois, in the prime of their lives. But if the deaths of Jefferson and Adams

became a miracle in the patriotic faith of America, the massacre of Joseph and Hyrum was a sacred moment to the Mormons and became the “fabled story” of their faith. In the tragedy at Carthage, the Smith brothers sealed their testimonies in blood and achieved the eternal crown of martyrdom.<sup>12</sup> For Joseph, this crown would forever assure his place on the second highest pedestal in Mormon piety.

The creation of the imagery began almost immediately as the martyrdom spawned a flurry of hymns, poems, songs, and essays, all celebrating the mission and greatness of Joseph Smith. In due time came hymns such as “Oh, Give Me Back My Prophet Dear,” and “The Seer, Joseph, the Seer,” by John Taylor; “Praise to the Man Who Communed with Jehovah,” by William W. Phelps; “We Thank Thee, O God, for a Prophet,” by William Fowler; and several others that have since become permanent fixtures in Mormon worship.<sup>13</sup>

Significantly, much of the new literature celebrated and culturally enshrined the martyrdom itself. It reminded the Saints that Joseph was not just a prophet, but God’s greatest prophet—an idea that Joseph himself did not stress, but one that naturally flowed from the impact he had on his disciples. The literature also told of the blood that still stained Illinois, crying to God for vengeance. The idea of vengeance is no longer characteristic of Mormon piety, but in the aftermath of the shocking murder at Carthage the cry seemed only natural to Joseph’s stunned disciples.

Typical of the immediate reaction was Eliza R. Snow’s poem, “The Assassination of Generals Joseph and Hyrum Smith,” which fairly reeked with the emotion of a devout believer who was not only shocked by the murder but also expected God somehow to repay the perpetrators:

Ye heav'ns, attend! Let all the earth give ear!  
 Let Gods and seraphs, men and angels hear:  
 The worlds on high—the universe shall know  
 What awful scenes are acted here below!  
 Had nature's self a heart, her heart would bleed;  
 At the recital of so foul a deed;  
 For never, since the Son of God was slain,  
 Has blood so noble, flow'd from human vein,  
 As that which now on God for vengeance calls  
 From "freedom's" ground—from Carthage prison walls!

Oh! Illinois! thy soil has drank the blood  
 Of Prophets martyr'd for the truth of God.  
 Once-lov'd America! what can atone  
 For the pure blood of innocence, thou'st sown?<sup>14</sup>

All the elements for the creation of a cultural hero were there: noble blood, second only to that of the "Son of God"; a wicked earth that rejected and spilled it; and the assurance that heaven would take note of the awful tragedy. The martyr image sank deep into Mormon culture and in the end was officially adopted by the canonizing of a statement that is still one of the most oft-quoted passages from modern Mormon scripture. Written by John Taylor, the apostle and close friend of Joseph Smith who himself received near-fatal wounds during the attack on Carthage Jail, it portrays as well as any statement could the awesome mission and achievements of the Mormon Prophet:

Joseph Smith, the Prophet and Seer of the Lord, has done more, save Jesus only, for the salvation of men in this world, than any other man that ever lived in it. In the short space of twenty years, he has brought forth the Book of Mormon, which he translated by the gift and power of God, and has been the means of publishing it on two continents; has sent the fulness of the everlasting

gospel, which it contained, to the four quarters of the earth; has brought forth the revelations and commandments which compose this book of Doctrine and Covenants, and many other wise documents and instructions for the benefit of the children of men; gathered many thousands of the Latter-day Saints, founded a great city, and left a fame and name that cannot be slain. He lived great, and he died great in the eyes of God and his people; and like most of the Lord's anointed in ancient times, has sealed his mission and his works with his own blood; and so has his brother Hyrum. (D&C 135:3)<sup>15</sup>

Joseph Smith's lasting charisma was tellingly illustrated in a letter written by Ursulia B. Hascall, while she camped on the plains of Iowa after the tragic Mormon exodus from Nauvoo in 1846. "If I had been in Nauvoo when I received your letter," she told her sister, "I would have sent some of Joseph's hair. All that have any here is in their bosom pins finger rings &c."<sup>16</sup> We may wonder how much hair was cut from the head of the dead prophet in 1844, but it is significant that in their awe of him many Saints clamored for even a tiny lock to keep in their private possession.

Mormonism now had its martyr and hero, but that was not the end of the story. Like that of George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Abraham Lincoln, and other historical figures, Joseph's popular image would soon be molded and shaped to suit a variety of needs and fit a multitude of interests. Taken as a whole, the literature of Mormon piety took the image of the founding prophet in several directions—some that he may have anticipated but others that he probably did not.

Consider, for example, the story of Joseph Smith's first vision. The Prophet bore solemn testimony that sometime in the early spring of 1820 he became confused in his quest for religion and so retired to a grove to pray for guidance.

After an intense struggle with the powers of darkness, his faith was rewarded with the appearance of two personages “whose brightness and glory,” he said, “defy all description, standing above me in the air. One of them spake unto me, calling me by name and said, pointing to the other—This is My Beloved Son. Hear Him!” The message he received was that none of the sects was right, but he was promised that “the fullness of the Gospel should at some future time be made known unto me.”<sup>17</sup> For several years after the organization of the church Joseph did not relate this sacred experience widely, until 1838 when he prepared it for publication. By the time he died it was well-known in the church. No evidence exists that Joseph himself used the account of the vision for any purpose other than to establish his initial prophetic calling. In later years, however, church members began to use it for a variety of devotional and instructional purposes. As with Joseph Smith himself, the vision became immortalized in art and literature. In addition, its impact grew to the point that it was used to illustrate for the faithful literally dozens of official doctrines or religious concepts.<sup>18</sup>

Just as the meaning of the vision went through a historical metamorphosis, so did the popular image of Joseph Smith himself. In a way it was all symbolized by the official celebration at Sharon, Vermont, on 23 December 1905—the one hundredth anniversary of the Prophet’s birth.<sup>19</sup> There at his birthplace church leaders, members, and townspeople assembled to see the unveiling of a 38½-foot granite shaft erected to his memory, each foot representing a year of Joseph’s life. After several appropriate speeches and a dedicatory prayer by Joseph F. Smith (nephew of the Prophet, and then president of the church), the congregation fervently sang the song that, more than any other, symbolized what the Saints thought of the Prophet:

Praise to the man who communed with Jehovah!  
Jesus anointed that Prophet and Seer.  
Blessed to open the last dispensation,  
Kings shall extol him, and nations revere.

Chorus:

Hail to the Prophet, ascended to heaven!  
Traitors and tyrants now fight him in vain.  
Mingling with Gods, he can plan for his brethren;  
Death cannot conquer the hero again.

Praise to his mem'ry, he died as a martyr;  
Honored and blest be his ever great name!  
Long shall his blood, which was shed by assassins,  
Stain Illinois<sup>20</sup> while the earth lauds his fame.

(Chorus)

Great is his glory and endless his priesthood.  
Ever and ever the keys he will hold.  
Faithful and true, he will enter his kingdom,  
Crowned in the midst of the prophets of old.

(Chorus)

Sacrifice brings forth the blessings of heaven;  
Earth must atone for the blood of that man.  
Wake up the world for the conflict of justice.  
Millions shall know "Brother Joseph" again.<sup>21</sup>

The Joseph on the pedestal has many manifestations, for his modern disciples see him in many patterns and circumstances. A favorite image, based on Joseph's personal experiences, is the uneducated, untrained boy-farmer-turned-prophet. *From Plowboy to Prophet* is the title of a popular book for young people printed in 1912,<sup>22</sup> but the sentiment repeats itself regularly in Mormon expressions of faith. "The story of Joseph's life is the story of a miracle," declared then Elder Gordon B. Hinckley in a 1977 general conference address. "He was born in poverty . . . reared in

adversity . . . driven from place to place . . . and . . . murdered at the age of thirty-eight. Yet in the brief space of twenty years preceding his death he accomplished what none other has accomplished in an entire lifetime."<sup>23</sup>

The most poignant and well-known statement employing such imagery came from John Henry Evans, in an introduction to a biography first published in 1933:

Here is a man who was born in the stark hills of Vermont; who was reared in the backwoods of New York; who never looked inside a college or high school; who lived in six States, no one of which would own him during his lifetime; who spent months in the vile prisons of the period; who, even when he had his freedom, was hounded like a fugitive; who was covered once with a coat of tar and feathers, and left for dead; who, with his following, was driven by irate neighbors from New York to Ohio, from Ohio to Missouri, and from Missouri to Illinois; and who, at the unripe age of thirty-eight, was shot to death by a mob with painted faces.

Yet this man became mayor of the biggest town in Illinois and the state's most prominent citizen, the commander of the largest body of trained soldiers in the nation outside the Federal army, the founder of cities and of a university, and aspired to become President of the United States.<sup>24</sup>

The statement continues with several very broad assessments, some of which may be exaggerated, yet as part of a symbol they represent an important element of popular Mormon piety. It is still quoted often in Mormon circles.

Some Mormons delight in telling stories of great men who stand in awe of Joseph Smith. Leo Tolstoy is credited with telling an American diplomat that Joseph Smith was the founder of the American religion.<sup>25</sup> John Henry Evans tells of a famous surgeon from Vienna (who is not named)



who declared that America had produced only one great man—Joseph Smith, and that he was great because of his ideas.<sup>26</sup> And hardly a Mormon has not heard the oft-quoted statement from Josiah Quincy, mayor of Boston, who visited Joseph Smith in 1844:

It is by no means improbable that some future textbook, for the use of generations yet unborn, will contain a question something like this: What historical American of the nineteenth century has exerted the most powerful influence on the destinies of his countrymen? And it is by no means impossible that the answer to that interrogatory may be thus written: Joseph Smith, the Mormon Prophet.<sup>27</sup>

If great men were impressed by Joseph, they were also baffled by him. Though the less complimentary portions of Josiah Quincy's commentary are forgotten, Mormons do not forget his final statement: "I have endeavored to give the details of my visit to the Mormon prophet with absolute accuracy. If the reader does not know just what to make of Joseph Smith, I cannot help him out of the difficulty. I myself stand helpless before the puzzle." John Henry Evans said that "[Joseph Smith] wrote a book which has baffled the literary critics for a hundred years," and it is still not uncommon to hear how he startled the world with one idea or another.<sup>28</sup>

It would be an exaggeration to say that in Mormon piety Joseph Smith becomes the greatest of almost everything. But the variety of things the founding prophet is said to have excelled in is amazing. In the introduction to a popular book entitled *The Journal of Joseph*, the compiler leaves the impression that everything in the book comes directly from Joseph's personal diary, which he kept or dictated religiously.<sup>29</sup> The problem with this is that virtually none of

Joseph Smith's history, from which the book was copied, was either written or dictated by Joseph—it was compiled by his scribes from a variety of journals and other sources. But such misdirection hardly matters in the minds of some—Joseph was great at so much, why not at this task, too? It all fits together so well.

Another popular book is filled with nothing but stories designed to prove that Joseph Smith had “uncommon courage,” was a great missionary, had the ability to speak with “remarkable power,” was “truly a great soul. . . . almost no heavenly principle was too large or complex to be comprehended by his mind,” and was a man of “astounding humility.”<sup>30</sup> My own acquaintance with Joseph Smith convinces me that he really did have these qualities, but such unrestrained and unqualified emphasis on them hardly leaves room for the other human being who was also there. This author seemed to leave the door just slightly ajar, however, when he compared Joseph with Jesus Christ. “Joseph Smith was a man,” he said, “—a distant second, but second, which places him in a remarkable position.”<sup>31</sup> Elsewhere we are told that Joseph Smith possessed all the qualities of a great leader—intelligence, zeal for learning, faith in a living God, power of introspection, and love of people. Another author defined his leadership qualities as great knowledge, courage, energy, and high character.<sup>32</sup> Whatever the real characteristics of a leader are, Joseph had them—almost any Mormon from Joseph's day to the present will tell you so. Every young Mormon also knows that Joseph was a fine athlete and was frequently seen wrestling with the strongest men in Nauvoo, “stick-pulling,” and engaging in other sports.

One book of selected readings, compiled in 1946 by a

prominent political scientist, is entitled *Joseph Smith Prophet-Statesman* and is designed to demonstrate Joseph Smith's great insight into the political issues and political philosophy of his day.<sup>33</sup> Another work, by a well-known Mormon scientist who also became an apostle, is entitled *Joseph Smith as Scientist*.<sup>34</sup> This author recognizes that Joseph had no scientific training at all, but this very fact fits the plowboy-to-prophet pattern beautifully. He taught principles, explains the author, that were consistent with the best scientific philosophy of his day as well as ours, and this is merely another evidence of his divine calling. In 1955 another prominent Mormon gave an address to the Brigham Young University student body entitled "Joseph Smith, Ph.D." He admitted that the title was "sheer irony," but he proceeded to show that Joseph Smith's great intellect, knowledge, and accomplishments made him equal or superior to any man.<sup>35</sup> More recently, a 1993 anthology of Joseph Smith, published by the Religious Studies Center at Brigham Young University, carried numerous laudatory articles, many of which pictured Joseph Smith as excelling in one thing or another.<sup>36</sup>

Much of modern Mormon piety sees Joseph Smith as in almost constant communication with God and angels. He received revelation on almost everything, including city planning,<sup>37</sup> temple building, politics, and social and economic organization. He knew Gods and angels personally, and some writers have taken pains to compile impressive lists of all the heavenly beings he met and conversed with over the years.<sup>38</sup> Joseph Smith himself may have been amused at the number of things on which he is said to have received divine guidance. During his lifetime he tried valiantly to persuade his followers that at least some of his ideas were his own. "The Lord has not given me a revela-

tion concerning politics," he declared during the heat of the 1843 election. "I have not asked him for one."<sup>39</sup> But at least one aspect of modern piety forms the basis for a Mormon fundamental that Joseph would fully agree with. As Daryl Chase once explained, "Nothing has ever given the Church of Christ—ancient or modern, more hope and zeal than the assurance that in their midst were men who could say in truth, 'Thus saith the Lord.'"<sup>40</sup> Joseph himself knew he was not "always a prophet" and that often he spoke without the benefit of revelation, but he also made it clear when he was speaking by revelation, and in those cases his "Thus saith the Lord" became binding on the church. As he stands on his pedestal, however, some modern Mormons (including those of us who are historians) hesitate to take it upon ourselves to distinguish when he was or was not speaking for the Lord. It seems so natural to assume that this was the norm.

In an article entitled "Which Thomas Jefferson Do You Quote?" Clinton Rossiter once showed that this great American hero had been quoted on almost every side of almost every issue, and was still being quoted by liberals and conservatives alike to support their particular views of the world. This happens to cultural heroes—they are adopted by any and everyone to support almost any cause. Within Mormondom something similar has happened to Joseph Smith. The phenomenon is not as extreme as in the case of Jefferson, but it exists nonetheless. Liberals, conservatives, and people promoting a variety of social and political causes have found support in the writings of Joseph Smith.<sup>41</sup>

In 1919, for example, Utah was bitterly divided during the League of Nations debate. It became a religious issue, and in the public discussions even church leaders quoted the Book of Mormon and the Doctrine and Covenants on

both sides of the question. The president of the church himself, though he supported the League of Nations, finally had to declare publicly that Mormon scriptures could not be used in that argument.<sup>42</sup>

A year later, early twentieth-century feminists no doubt felt a tremendous boost when Susa Young Gates wrote an article in the official church magazine arguing that Joseph Smith's first vision had paved the way for women to take their rightful place alongside, not behind, men. "Can you conceive," she asked, "what the vision meant to woman? It meant in civil, religious, social and finally, financial matters, the right of choice; it meant women's free agency, the liberation of her long-chained will and purpose."<sup>43</sup> Gates did not explain just how all this was achieved, but suddenly the founding prophet's great theophany was an argument for everything Gates and her colleagues had been working toward for years.

However, quoting Joseph Smith is more fundamental to piety than simply getting his support on miscellaneous public issues. What is more significant is the fact that in a strictly religious setting, such as a general conference of the church, Joseph Smith is quoted with great regularity on religious, moral, and ethical issues. If he is second only to Christ in Mormon piety, the frequency with which he is quoted in conference amply demonstrates the point. Church leaders who addressed the April 1997 General Conference, for example, used or cited about 270 passages from either the scriptures or the religious writings of Joseph Smith. Less than one-third (80) came from the Bible, while the rest (190) came from modern Mormon scriptures or other writings of Joseph Smith.<sup>44</sup> That says something important about the continuing role of Joseph Smith in Mormon religious worship.

Some Mormons delight in amassing external evidence that the prophetic claims of Joseph were true. Much is written about the fulfillment of his prophecies, even though in some cases the authors must strain considerably in order to make the historical facts fit the prophecy.<sup>45</sup> Other writers attempt to prove his calling on the basis of such phenomena as the greatness of his ideas, the wholeness of his religious philosophy, or scientific evidence for the authenticity of the Book of Mormon. One writer devoted almost an entire book to a discussion of the fate of the persecutors of Joseph Smith, demonstrating that they died horribly, ignobly, or in poverty. Somehow this was supposed to prove that God had taken vengeance, and therefore that Joseph was his prophet.<sup>46</sup> More recent Mormon writers, however, tend to downplay the idea of vengeance, and the leading book on the trial of the accused assassins of the Prophet demonstrates that most of those who were directly accused of the killing went on to live comfortable, productive lives.<sup>47</sup> The authors of this book were not trying to demonstrate anything with regard to Joseph, but as individuals they could be classed with other Mormons who are not too highly concerned with external "proofs." In private conversation, such Latter-day Saints often ask nonbelievers to pray, with the assurance that the truth of Joseph Smith's divine calling can be made known, by the power of the Spirit, to anyone who asks in sincerity. The Joseph Smith piety is, in part, a missionary piety, and it is often infectious.<sup>48</sup>

I hope, with all this, I am not presenting a distorted view of what the Mormons think of Joseph Smith. His image is that of a prophet, but it is not that of a dreary, overly pious, or humorless leader. Joseph pictured himself as having a jovial temperament, and his good humor, even temper, and love of wholesome entertainment are all well

documented in Mormon literature and in the Mormon mind. As Leonard Arrington wrote in the church's magazine for youth:

Because of this spontaneity, joviality, and combination of seriousness of purpose and good humor, everybody was quickly attracted to Joseph Smith. . . . Certainly the calling of prophet was one of such high seriousness that its responsibilities could well have weighted down a less vital mind. But it was humor that helped Joseph to dispose of conflicts and problems that did not really matter. The Prophet was deeply serious, but he was not solemn; he believed an unduly solemn person has lost something of the image of his Creator.<sup>49</sup>

Nor do the Mormons completely ignore the fact that Joseph, like the rest of us, had his human failings. Often, however, the faithful tend to obscure this fact behind the overwhelming dominance of the heroic image, and many young people are not prepared for the man behind the image—outstanding as he was—when he suddenly steps out to meet them. This leads to another significant element of Mormon piety—the hours spent by teachers like me trying to help inquiring students develop both a balanced and a faithful view of the Prophet and the church he restored.

As Merrill Peterson characterized the image of Thomas Jefferson in the American mind, he discussed three agents for perpetuating that image: the shrine, the academy, and the temple. The shrine was Monticello—Jefferson's home that told so much about him and his ideals. The academy was the University of Virginia, which represented the "civilized man," while the temple was the magnificent Jefferson Memorial in Washington, D.C. "Monuments of this majestic pomp are not built to the living, only to the dead," he wrote, "and thus the Jefferson Memorial was the most important thing to happen to Jefferson since July Fourth 1826."<sup>50</sup>

The image of Joseph Smith is not exactly comparable, but the symbolism of the shrine, the academy, and the temple is useful in depicting some aspects of popular Mormon piety. The shrine could well be the city of Nauvoo. Each visitor will see something different there, but for the Mormon, Nauvoo represents the great spiritual as well as external achievements of Joseph Smith. Many of its buildings have been restored by Nauvoo Restoration, an organization closely affiliated with the church, and others have been restored by the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. Each year tens of thousands of visitors (mostly Mormons, I assume), see Joseph's homes, his brick store, the site of the temple, and various homes that were complete before the Mormon exodus. The restoration is not the genuine historic Nauvoo, for only certain buildings have been restored, but the effort is to portray what Joseph built. For Mormons, the visit is a religious pilgrimage.

Joseph Smith has no academy like that of Jefferson, but in a symbolic sense the living church is his academy. All who speak of his accomplishments usually speak of the grandeur of the church itself, and so its ideas, influences, and achievements become one of his monuments just as much as Jefferson's university is one of his.

The Mormons also have temples, many of them, that serve sacred functions quite different from regular meetinghouses. But in the symbolic sense we are considering here, Joseph Smith's temple is found in a kind of union between the Sacred Grove in New York and the jails in Liberty, Missouri, and Carthage, Illinois. It is commonplace among Mormons to make pilgrimages to these spots, which they regard as sacred. As they stand in the grove in New York, they try to relive the sacred experience of 1820 and are frequently seen weeping—especially after they may have joined with friends in a private religious



service somewhere in the grove. When they go to Liberty, Missouri, they find a replica of the jail where the Prophet languished for many months, but where some of his most touching and spiritually important revelations were received. The guides, in fact, depict it as a temple, and it is housed in a domed building that only adds to the shrine-like aura. Around the walls of the room housing the jail, like the walls of the Jefferson Memorial, are quotations from the deeply moving revelations Joseph received in Liberty's dungeon. And finally, as the visitor goes to Carthage, he experiences all the pathos and sorrow that attended the death of the Prophet. Many Mormon visitors (myself included) are moved to tears if they have studied very deeply the sad scenes of that fateful day in 1844. The blood of Hyrum Smith that once stained the floor of the room has practically faded away; the guides are not even sure they can identify where it was. Perhaps that is symbolic of the fact that the old desire for vengeance has also disappeared, but what remains among the Mormons is an overwhelming love for the Prophet that is only enhanced by the imagery of what happened that day.

Joseph Smith, then, is the hero of Mormon piety. I have tried to give some insight into how his heroic image was attained—how followers have placed him on a pedestal that he will always occupy with all the grace and dignity of a great man. But, as scholars, we are never sure we know all the reasons why great men occupy such pedestals. Sidney Hook has suggested three. First, he says, is the “need for psychological security.” If great men think of themselves as the fathers of countries or movements, their followers develop patterns of dependency and look at the great men as their father figures. A second factor is the tendency of people to seek vicarious satisfaction of their

own yearnings through a leader's presumed traits or achievements. If they cannot do all the things they want to do, or be all the things they want to be, they can at least share these dreams imaginatively through their hero. Finally, Hook suggests that some people flee from responsibility, grasping for simple answers to complicated problems by surrendering the decision-making process to their leaders.<sup>51</sup>

I am sure that by diligent investigation we could find elements of all these factors among the followers of Joseph Smith. But other, more fundamental, forces also affect Mormon piety—especially the piety of some Mormon academicians. It is our lot in life to get personally involved in whatever documents remain from the days of Joseph Smith, to analyze in detail what they say—not just about Joseph the Prophet but also about Joseph the man. As we do so, he seems to step down from his pedestal for a while and to walk and talk with us somewhat as he did with the Saints of his own day. We see him in all his strengths and human frailties. Perhaps as much as anything else, his human qualities leap out at us like a jack-in-the-box when the lid that hides him is suddenly removed. We see his business failures, his sometimes poor choice of friends and confidants, the failure of some of his prophecies, the social and nonrevelatory sources of some of his ideas, the impracticality of some of his proposals, the incompleteness of his education, the anger he could sometimes display, the too sudden precipitousness of some of his actions, the glass-looking and other strange affairs of his youth, and his disappointments with himself. But that is not all. We also see his success as both religious leader and community builder, the responsible and respectable people who became his permanent friends and confidants, the plans and

prophecies that were fulfilled, the all-encompassing nature of his mind that allowed him to deal with a multitude of far-reaching concepts and ideas, the uniqueness of many of his doctrines and the profound meaning they have always had for Latter-day Saints, his deep love for his fellowmen, his thirst for knowledge, his friendly nature and his readiness to forgive quickly, his personal recognition of his youthful follies and the effective way he overcame them, and his ability to bounce back promptly from disappointment or despair.

Finally, as we become better acquainted with both his “strictly human” and his prophetic sides, we also feel something else—possibly because of our continuing will to believe, perhaps because of our personal experiences with the results of belief. We see him as an authentic prophet, and even though he has stepped down from the pedestal to let us examine all his flaws, we are not dismayed when he steps back up.<sup>52</sup> Our experience with the Prophet, in all his strengths and weaknesses, still allows us to say, along with William Clayton, “The more I am with him, the more I love him; the more I know of him, . . . [the more I] am sorry that people should give heed to evil reports concerning him.” “He says ‘I am a man of like passions with yourselves,’ but truly I wish I was such a man.”

### Notes

Author’s note: This essay is clearly a personal statement, though it is hoped that the reader will also recognize its scholarly underpinnings. The first-person approach is a result of the setting in which it was initially presented, a symposium on “Joseph Smith and the Mormons,” sponsored by the Department of Religious Studies at the University of Indiana, Bloomington, 4–5 December 1981. People attending the symposium included several

Mormon historians, non-Mormon historians from religious studies departments at various universities, and a cross-section of Mormons from Indiana. This was one of a series of such symposia designed to help scholars of American religion better understand specific religious movements. I was invited to address the group on “Joseph Smith and Mormon Piety,” and I felt at the time that a personal approach to such a topic would be the best. This essay is a slightly edited version of what I presented in 1981. I appreciate the opportunity to have it published as part of the Richard L. Anderson Festschrift, for I consider Anderson one of the foremost scholars on Joseph Smith.

1. Merrill D. Peterson, *The Jefferson Image in the American Mind* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1960), 14.

2. This, it seems to me, is one of the personal responsibilities of the believing teacher—to present a balanced view of the Prophet that will help students maintain an equable and viable faith and at the same time prepare them to deal honestly with all the historical and intellectual problems that may confront them. My personal experience over four decades of teaching convinces me that students respect such an approach more than one that tries to hide or ignore any problems that may have occurred. I will never forget, for example, the personal satisfaction I received when one student told me that my church history class had replaced the unstable “rug” under her “testimony” with “pillars” that could never be shaken. When I asked for an explanation she said that up until she had taken that class, almost anything she heard that seemed incongruous with her traditional, Sunday School images of church history disturbed her and weakened her faith, but that when she heard the “problems” discussed openly and frankly, in an atmosphere of both faith and honesty, she developed an attitude toward potential problems that she would always be able to use. It is in the development of perceptions, attitudes, and methods for meeting problems that the religious teacher makes his greatest contribution—not just in the “answers” he gives to particular problems. And this contribution is

made only if students recognize the personal efforts at scholarly integrity made by the teacher himself.

3. *History of the Church*, 5:265.

4. David Whitmer, *An Address to All Believers in Christ* (Richmond, Mo.: Whitmer, 1887), 31, as cited in *Comprehensive History of the Church*, 1:163.

5. Brigham Young, in *Journal of Discourses*, 7:243 (1 September 1859).

6. During one meeting some people proposed deposing the Prophet. As recorded by Brigham Young: "I rose up, and in a plain and forcible manner told them Joseph was a Prophet, and I knew it, and that they might rail and slander as much as they pleased, they could not destroy the appointment of the Prophet of God, they could only destroy their own authority, cut the thread that bound them to the Prophet and to God, and sink themselves to hell." Brigham Young, *Manuscript History of Brigham Young*, ed. Elden J. Watson (Salt Lake City: Smith Secretarial Service, 1968), 16.

7. *Ibid.*, 140, 156.

8. William Clayton to the Saints in Manchester, 10 December 1840, William Clayton collection, LDS Church Archives, Salt Lake City, Utah, as quoted in *BYU Studies* 18/3 (1978): 478, 479. The rest of this quotation contains more impressive comment on the Prophet:

He is very familiar, and delights to instruct the poor saints. I can converse with him just as easy as I can with you, and with regard to being willing to communicate instruction he says 'I receive it freely and I will give it freely.' He is willing to answer any question I have put to him and is pleased when we ask him questions. He seems exceeding well versed in the scriptures, and whilst conversing upon any subject such light and beauty is revealed I never saw before. If I had come from England purposely to converse with him a few days I should have considered myself well paid for my trouble. He is no friend to iniquity but cuts at it wherever he sees

it and it is in vain to attempt to cloke it before him. He has a great measure of the spirit of God, and by this means he is preserved from imposition (ibid., 478–79).

9. William Clayton to William Hardman, 30 March 1842, as printed in *Millennial Star* 3 (August 1843): 74–76, and reprinted in *BYU Studies* 12/1 (1971): 123.

10. Peterson, *Jefferson Image*, 5.

11. Ibid., 5–6.

12. For important insight into the impact of the martyrdom on Mormons as well as non-Mormons, see Davis Bitton, “The Martyrdom of Joseph Smith in Early Mormon Writings,” *John Whitmer Historical Association Journal* 3 (1983): 29–39; Davis Bitton, *The Martyrdom Remembered: A One-Hundred-Fifty Year Perspective on the Assassination of the Prophet Joseph Smith* (Salt Lake City: Aspen Books, 1994). See also Kenneth W. Godfrey, “Remembering the Deaths of Joseph and Hyrum Smith,” in *Joseph Smith: The Prophet, the Man*, ed. Susan Easton Black and Charles D. Tate Jr. (Provo, Utah: BYU Religious Studies Center, 1993), 301–15. For more insight into Joseph Smith’s general image among both Mormons and non-Mormons, see Davis Bitton, *Images of the Prophet Joseph Smith* (Salt Lake City: Aspen Books, 1996); Davis Bitton, “Joseph Smith in the Mormon Folk Memory,” *Restoration Studies* 1 (1980): 75–94.

13. These include the following hymns published in the current Mormon hymnal: “Come, Listen to a Prophet’s Voice,” “Come, Sing to the Lord,” “Joseph Smith’s First Vision,” and “Now We’ll Sing with One Accord.”

14. Eliza R. Snow, *Poems, Religious, Historical, and Political* (Liverpool: Richards, 1856), 142–43, first printed in *Times and Seasons* 5 (1 July 1844): 575.

15. The rest of the quotation is just as powerful a statement of the Mormon view of Joseph Smith and the significance of his death. It continues, in part:

Henceforward their names will be classed among the martyrs of religion; . . . They lived for glory; they died for glory; and glory is their eternal reward. From age to age

shall their names go down to posterity as gems for the sanctified.

They were innocent of any crime, . . . and their innocent blood on the floor of Carthage jail is a broad seal affixed to "Mormonism" that cannot be rejected by any court on earth, and their innocent blood on the escutcheon of the State of Illinois, with the broken faith of the State as pledged by the governor, is a witness to the truth of the everlasting gospel that all the world cannot impeach; and their innocent blood on the banner of liberty, and on the *magna charta* of the United States, is an ambassador for the religion of Jesus Christ, that will touch the hearts of honest men among all nations; and their innocent blood, with the innocent blood of all the martyrs under the altar that John saw, will cry unto the Lord of Hosts till he avenges that blood on the earth. Amen. (D&C 135:6–7)

16. Ursulia B. Hascall to her sister (in a letter addressed to Col. Wilson Andrews), 19 September 1846, "Letters of a Proselyte: The Hascall-Pomeroy Correspondence," *Utah Historical Quarterly* 25 (April 1957): 150.

17. See Joseph Smith's official account of his first vision in the Pearl of Great Price, Joseph Smith—History 1:11–20; the "Wentworth letter" in *History of the Church*, 4:536.

18. See James B. Allen, "Emergence of a Fundamental: The Expanding Role of Joseph Smith's First Vision in Mormon Religious Thought," *Journal of Mormon History* 7 (1980): 43–61. For an interesting discussion of how the first vision has been pictured in stained glass, see Joyce A. Janetski, "The First Vision and Mormon Stained Glass," *Stained Glass* 75 (spring 1980): 47–50.

19. The proceedings of the dedication of the monument are published in a pamphlet entitled *Proceedings at the Dedication of the Joseph Smith Memorial Monument, at Sharon, Windsor County, Vermont, December 23rd 1905* (n. p., n. d.).

20. The phrase *stain Illinois* was changed in the Mormon

hymnal in 1927 in order to be in harmony with the “good neighbor” policy of the church and nation, so that it now reads *plead unto heav’n*.

21. “Praise to the Man,” *Hymns*, 1985, no. 27.

22. See William A. Morton, *From Plowboy to Prophet* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Sunday School Union, 1912).

23. Gordon B. Hinckley, “Joseph the Seer,” *Ensign* (May 1977): 64–66.

24. See introductory page to John Henry Evans, *Joseph Smith: An American Prophet* (New York: Macmillan, 1940).

25. For an interesting discussion of this tradition, the problems connected with it, and its possible origin, see Leland A. Fetzer, “Tolstoy and Mormonism,” *Dialogue* 6/1 (1971): 13–29.

26. John Henry Evans, *The Leadership of Joseph Smith* (Salt Lake City: General Boards of the Mutual Improvement Associations, 1934), 5–6.

27. From Josiah Quincy, *Figures of the Past*, as quoted in *Among the Mormons: Historic Accounts by Contemporary Observers*, ed. William Mulder and A. Russell Mortensen (New York: Knopf, 1958), 131.

28. See Quincy, as quoted in *Among the Mormons*, 142; Evans, *An American Prophet*, introductory page; George Q. Cannon address of 7 October 1883 in *Journal of Discourses*, 24:340, in which Cannon says that “the religious world stood aghast at the ideas advanced by the Prophet Joseph Smith, and those associated with him.” Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, 2nd ed. (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1966), 286, reports that Joseph Smith’s first vision rocked “the whole religious foundation of the Christian world.”

29. See Leland R. Nelson, comp., *The Journal of Joseph: The Personal Diary of a Modern Prophet* (Provo, Utah: Council Press, 1979).

30. Leon R. Hartshorn, *Joseph Smith: Prophet of the Restoration* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1970), *passim*.

31. *Ibid.*, 121. The same tone is repeated in many books, including, for example, John J. Stewart, *Joseph Smith: Democracy’s*



*Unknown Prophet* (Salt Lake City: Mercury, 1960), 118–19, where Joseph is credited with being “the most influential American of the 19th century, or of any century.”

32. William E. Berrett, “Joseph Smith—Five Qualities of Leadership,” *New Era* (June 1977): 40–43; Evans, “Qualities of Leadership in Joseph Smith,” in *Leadership of Joseph Smith*, 13–20.

33. See G. Homer Durham, *Joseph Smith Prophet-Statesman: Readings in American Political Thought* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1946).

34. See John A. Widtsoe, *Joseph Smith as Scientist: A Contribution to Mormon Philosophy* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1964).

35. Dix W. Price, “Joseph Smith, Ph.D.,” address to BYU student body, 5 April 1955, copy located in Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University. Joseph Smith’s translation of the Book of Mormon in ninety days; his study of law and of ancient and modern languages; his founding of a university at Nauvoo; his study of such things as religion, history, and geography; and his promulgating to the world the “startling revelation” concerning the eternal nature of man’s intelligence and knowledge—all these things are used as evidence of his profound knowledge and educational attainments, even though he had never been to college.

36. See *Joseph Smith: The Prophet, the Man*, ed. Black and Tate. Some of the titles of articles that illustrate this point are: Danel W. Bachman, “Joseph Smith, a True Martyr,” 317–32; Alexander L. Baugh, “Joseph Smith’s Athletic Nature,” 137–50; Alvin K. Benson, “Joseph Smith on Modern Science,” 151–67; Arnold K. Garr, “Joseph Smith: Man of Forgiveness,” 127–36; Robert J. Matthews, “Joseph Smith—Translator,” 77–87; Royal Skousen, “Joseph Smith: Gifted Learner, Master Teacher, Prophetic Seer,” 65–75. See also Bruce A. Van Orden, “The Compassion of Joseph Smith,” in *To Be Learned Is Good If . . .*, ed. Robert L. Millet (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1987), 43–57.

37. See comments by Dan Farr, an LDS architect, in Question and Answer section of *New Era* (May 1974): 32.

38. For example, see Ronald V. Jackson, *The Seer, Joseph Smith*,

*His Education from the Most High* (Salt Lake City: Hawkes, 1977), which is devoted entirely to a long list of angels who appeared to Joseph Smith. Much of the list is based not on Joseph Smith's own writings, but on what people later said about Joseph. Robert J. Woodford, in "Book of Mormon Personalities Known by Joseph Smith," *Ensign* (August 1978): 14, does a similar thing and quotes the early apostle John Taylor to the effect that Joseph Smith "seemed to be just as familiar with the Spirit World, and as well acquainted with the other side, as he was here."

39. *History of the Church*, 5:526.

40. Daryl Chase, *Joseph the Prophet: As He Lives in the Hearts of His People* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1944), 79.

41. On the conservative side, see Richard Vetterli, *The Constitution by a Thread* (Salt Lake City: Paramount, 1967), and Jerreld L. Newquist, comp., *Prophets, Principles and National Survival* (Salt Lake City: Publishers Press, 1946). On the more liberal side, see David S. King, "Democratic Party Principles Are Compatible with L.D.S. Principles," address to the Young Democrats Club, Brigham Young University, 1962, copy in my possession. A note of balance was achieved by Durham in his *Joseph Smith Prophet-Statesman*, ix: "Finally a word of warning may be issued to those Mormon readers who may combine religious fervor with partisan zeal. Joseph Smith was not a 'reactionary Republican,' nor was he a 'New Deal Democrat.' Any effort to make him out as such is foredoomed to failure. He met the problems of his day. We are free to meet the problems of ours. Joseph Smith's constant effort, in his own mind, was to influence the world of men toward an ideal of the kingdom of God."

42. See James B. Allen, "Personal Faith and Public Policy: Some Timely Observations on the League of Nations Controversy in Utah," *BYU Studies* 14/1 (1973): 77-98.

43. Susa Young Gates, "The Vision Beautiful," *Improvement Era* (April 1920): 542-43.

44. These figures are arrived at by simply counting the references in the conference address, as published in the *Ensign* magazine.

45. See Nephi L. Morris, *Prophecies of Joseph Smith and Their Fulfillment* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1926); Duane S. Crowther, *The Prophecies of Joseph Smith* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1963); and Evans, "Major Prophecies of Joseph Smith," in *Leadership of Joseph Smith*, 60–67.

46. See N. B. Lundwall, comp., *The Fate of the Persecutors of the Prophet Joseph Smith* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1952).

47. See Dallin H. Oaks and Marvin S. Hill, afterword to *Carthage Conspiracy: The Trial of the Accused Assassins of Joseph Smith* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1975), 217–21.

48. One fairly obvious element of Mormon piety is an underlying commitment to the proposition that even though historical evidence will ultimately support the faith, final "proof" of Joseph Smith's prophetic mission is not to be found in such evidence but, rather, in the "testimony of the Spirit." Some may consider this to be mere "blind faith," or even fanaticism, but, I submit, most Mormons I know, including respected Mormon scholars, will tell you that it would be asking too much to expect purely empirical, scholarly methodology either to prove or disprove the spiritual claims of Joseph Smith, including the authenticity of the Book of Mormon. Such studies may help, but the evidence is usually circumstantial and often produces conflicting results. The ultimate test is spelled out in the Book of Mormon itself—Moroni 10:4: "And when ye shall receive these things, I would exhort you that ye would ask God, the Eternal Father, in the name of Christ, if these things are not true; and if ye shall ask with a sincere heart, with real intent, having faith in Christ, he will manifest the truth of it unto you, by the power of the Holy Ghost." Recognizing the purely subjective nature of such evidence, most Mormon scholars will explain the basis for their faith to anyone who asks, but will refrain from entering into fruitless efforts to "prove" the Joseph Smith story by traditional objective means.

49. Leonard J. Arrington, "Joseph Smith and the Lighter View," *New Era* (August 1976): 11, 13.

50. Peterson, *Jefferson Image*, 379.

51. Sidney Hook, *The Hero in History: A Study in Limitation and Possibility* (London: Secker and Warburg, 1945), 24–25.

52. For some insight into the way a few well-known Mormon scholars have portrayed Joseph Smith in recent years, see Thomas G. Alexander, "'A New and Everlasting Covenant': An Approach to the Theology of Joseph Smith," in *New Views of Mormon History: Essays in Honor of Leonard J. Arrington*, ed. Davis Bitton and Maureen Ursenbach Beecher (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1987), 43–62; Leonard J. Arrington, *Faith and Intellect as Partners in Mormon History* (Logan, Utah: Utah State University Press, 1996); Leonard J. Arrington, "Joseph Smith," in *The Presidents of the Church*, ed. Leonard J. Arrington (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1986), 3–40; Richard L. Bushman, "How Did the Prophet Joseph Smith Respond to Skepticism in His Time?" *Ensign* (February 1990): 61–63; Richard L. Bushman, *Joseph Smith and the Beginnings of Mormonism* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1984); Truman G. Madsen, *Joseph Smith the Prophet* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1989); Robert L. Millet, *Joseph Smith: Selected Sermons and Writings* (New York: Paulist, 1989); Thomas F. Rogers, "Thoughts about Joseph Smith: Upon Reading Donna Hill's *Joseph Smith: The First Mormon*," in *By Study and Also by Faith: Essays in Honor of Hugh W. Nibley*, ed. John M. Lundquist and Stephen D. Ricks (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1990), 2:585–618. For a recent and respected non-Mormon evaluation of Joseph Smith, see Jan Shipps, *Mormonism: The Story of a New Religious Tradition* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1985).